

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 05031

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: BG, PGOV
SUBJECT: FAROUK SOBHAN

REF: DACCA 1237

1. FAROUK SOBHAN, HIGHLY REGARDED AMONG HIS DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES HERE, WAS NUMBER TWO MAN AT THE SMALL BANGLADESH MISSION HERE AND OFTEN SERVED AS CHARGE. HE AND HIS ATTRACTIVE WIFE MIXED WELL IN THE DIPLOMATIC CIRCUIT. SOBHAN IS VERY INTELLIGENT AND HAS AN ADMIRABLE ABILITY TO CONCEPTUALIZE BROAD INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL CURRENTS. HE MADE IT A POINT TO MEET PERIODICALLY WITH HIS U.S., UK, ARAB, CHINESE AND SOVIET MFA CONTACTS TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION AND OPINIONS.

2. SOBHAN HAD CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH U.S. DIPLOMATS BOTH HERE AND IN BELGRADE. HE SEEMS WELL DISPOSED TO THE U.S. HE HAD CLOSE FRIENDS IN THE PAKISTANI MISSION, ESPECIALLY WITH THE PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR SAJJAD HYER WITH WHOM HE SERVED TEN YEARS AGO IN CAIRO. HE OFTEN ATTENDED PAKISTANI PARTIES BUT WAS SEEN ONLY OCCASIONALLY AT INDIAN FUNCTIONS. PRIVATELY, SOBHAN WAS SOMEWHAT NEGATIVE TOWARD INDIA. BECAUSE OF THESE FACTORS, WE WOULD GUESS THAT HIS SYMPATHIES LIE MORE WITH ISLAMABAD
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THAN WITH DELHI.

3. SOBHAN SHARED THE BASICALLY NEGATIVE OUTLOOK TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION ENTERTAINED BY HIS WESTERN AND PAKISTANI COUNTERPARTS HERE, A PERSPECTIVE THAT MAY HAVE BEEN REINFORCED BY HIS SERVICE IN DACCA AND BELGRADE. HE

ONCE TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT THE SOVIETS MAY HAVE HAD A HAND IN THE 1977 COUP AGAINST ZIA RAHMAN, AND HE EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT OBVIOUS SOVIET DISCOMFORT OVER THE SUBSEQUENT BDG CRACKDOWN ON COMMUNISTS. HE ENJOYED TELLING ANTI-SOVIET JOKES.

4. SOBHAN IS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. HE FREQUENTLY INITIATED DISCUSSIONS ON TRENDS AND PROBLEMS IN THE NAM. WE ANTICIPATE THAT HE WILL ENCOURAGE AN ACTIVE BANGLADESH ROLE IN THE NAM FROM HIS NEW SENIOR POSITION IN DACCA.

5. SOBHAN IS DECIDEDLY ANGLICIZED IN HIS MANNERS, SPEECH AND EDUCATION. HE CAN BE FORMAL AND DRY DURING THE FIRST STAGES OF ACQUAINTANCESHIP, BUT HE BECOMES VERY WARM - IF STILL SOMEWHAT DISTANT - THEREAFTER. SOBHAN SERVED IN PARIS BUT SPEAKS POOR FRENCH. HE LOVES TO PLAY BRIDGE AND HAS AN IMPRESSIVE COLLECTION OF BOOKS ON THAT SUBJECT. TOON

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** ONLY

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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